CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Navone Hazardous Fuels Reduction
Proposed Implementation Date:	October 2018
Proponent:	LTL Forestry, Swan Valley Connections, Lisa and Joseph Navone
Location:	S15, T26N, R19W 13756 Crystal Creek Lane Bigfork MT. 59911 19.97 Acres
County:	Lake

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The project involves a potential issuance of an Alternative Practice (AP) to operate masticating equipment for harvest and disposal of sub-merchantable trees within a Class 2 Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) immediately adjacent to the landowners homesite. The purpose of this project is to reduce the risk of high intensity catastrophic wildfire and exposure to the landowners home and property by removing ladder fuels, creating space between tree crowns, and reducing down woody debris. Project is located on private property within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which contributes to the overall wildfire risk in the South Ferndale Community area.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Project is entirely on private property.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

No other agencies or permits involved.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A. No action. No AP will be issued and any harvest within the SMZ would have to adhere to the laws established to protect a Class 2 stream which includes protection of sub-merchantable trees and shrubs. The excessive volume of sub-merchantable trees is a major contributing factor to the existing wildfire risk, and therefore, retention of these trees would not meet landowner objectives to reduce the fire hazard.

B. An AP will be granted to harvest sub-merchantable trees from the SMZ, but no equipment will be allowed to enter the SMZ. This alternative would meet landowners goals in reducing the fire hazard, however, due to the large amount of material to be moved several factors would be in play. It may not be possible or feasible to remove such a large volume of biomass and attempt to dispose of this volume outside of the SMZ. If determined feasible, the alternative may still be cost-prohibitive to implement. All retention and spacing requirements outlined in the treatment plan developed by Swan Valley Connections (SVC) will be adhered to.

C. An AP will be granted to enter into the SMZ with masticating equipment to harvest and dispose of sub-merchantable trees and shrubs. Equipment will be allowed to operate under the following conditions: Equipment will only be allowed to operate in dry conditions. Equipment will be

allowed to come within 15 feet of wet area/stream which will be marked with pink flagging. Equipment will NOT be allowed to cross the creek bed at any time or location. Equipment will grind/masticate trees and shrubs in front of itself and drive on shredded biomass to limit any impact to the soil. Equipment will enter and exit the SMZ in a straight, perpendicular fashion on a 25' average trail spacing. Equipment will NOT be used to yard, skid or drag any material outside the SMZ. Harvested material may be carried out of the SMZ if no additional trips are necessary. Any rutting or soil disturbance will be smoothed out and seeded with grass by the operator. All retention and spacing requirements outlined in the treatment plan by SVC will be adhered to.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The project area is split between a gravelly loam in the upper ½ and a silty loam in the lower ½. Equipment will be operating in dry periods only. Equipment will be travelling on top of shredded/organic material which will protect against any soil disturbance or compaction. Equipment entry will be in-out in a single pass. No cumulative impact expected.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The Class 2 creek begins as a spring sourced in two spots and then flows approx. 480 feet into a series of tiny ponds (less than 1/10ac) where it is captured in a canal and channeled into the neighboring property where it is used for irrigation. Any disturbance of the creek channel would impact water quality for livestock, but since the flow is captured and used as irrigation, no other adverse impacts are identified. No cumulative effects expected.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

No impact expected, all debris is to be masticated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The thinning of the nearly continuous cover of sub-merchantable Grand Fir and Cedar will allow sunlight to reach the forest floor which will encourage enhancement and expansion of existing riparian species present near the creek. A cumulative response by riparian plant species would be a desirous outcome. There are no known rare plants or cover types.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Deer, elk, moose, and bears travel through the project site and evidence shows they utilize the spring as a water source. There are no fish in this system. An increase in riparian shrub and plant species will enhance habitat for existing wildlife. No other cumulative effects would be expected.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

No federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat has been identified in the project area.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No historical or archaeological resources have been identified in the project area.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The project area is only visible from the landowners home.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

This project would not use any limited resources in the area. The project, as outlined in each alternative, will not impact any nearby activities.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

No other plans or projects are scheduled for this tract. No cumulative impacts are likely to occur as a result of other private, state, or federal projects in the area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No health or safety risks are posed by the project

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The project has the potential to produce a small amount of commercial wood products for regional processing facilities. No other impacts are identified.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project will provide direct employment for several people for approx. 3 weeks. This project supports a diverse wood products industry in which many people are employed. No jobs would be eliminated as a result of this project. No long term effects to the employment market are expected.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No significant tax revenue will be created.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

A temporary increase in traffic on South Ferndale Road, Bug Creek Road, and Crystal Creek Rd will occur during the project. No changes will be needed or required by local government. No cumulative effects to local government services will occur as a result of this project.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

No zoning or other management plans will be affected by this project.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No public access is allowed through this project area and will have no impact on recreational amenities in the area.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

None

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The project will have no impact on the area outside the private property. See section 24.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

This project is entirely on private property, however, the existing fire danger as a result of the fuel loading and arrangement, and the reduction of that risk, does contribute to the exposure of the surrounding landscape. Neighboring landowners stand to benefit as a result of this project.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Nathan Arno	**Date:** 9/25/2018
	Title: Service Forester	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:
Alternative C is the approved action.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Upon review of the project and the analysis herein, I find that none of the expected impacts from the project would be regarded as long term or significant to the landscape. I find the quality and quantity of natural resources will not be adversely affected. I find that any adverse impacts would be mitigated by the design of the project to an extent that they are not significant.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [x] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** /s/ David M. Poukish	
	Title: Kalispell Unit Manager, DNRC	
Signature:		**Date:** 9/27/18

HRA Map POZ

The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

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